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Mrs. Patterson

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Ap English Literture

Elizabethan Era

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?

By William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May;

And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or Nature's changing course, untrimmed:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ownest,

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to Time thou growest.

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

1. Speaker
   * Who is the speaker? Shakespeare
   * What is the speaker's point of view? That the girl, or guy, he is with is incredibly wonderful and beautiful.
   * Who is the speaker's audience? The person whom he is speaking of.
   * What is the speaker's topic, argument, etc.? He tell his lover, they are so beautiful and they will be remembered forever by this poem.
2. Tone
   * What is the dominant tone in the poem? The tone is very happy
   * Does the tone of the poem shift? Where? Why? Yes, a little at line 10 because instead of naming good attributes the speaker names bad ones that his lover is not.
3. Imagery
   * Using the five senses (feel, hear, see, smell, taste) isolate the main images In that sonnet the appeal is made to the senses of sight (summer’s day, gold complexion, shade, eyes can see), hearing (the sound of her voice), smell (men can breathe), feel ( rough winds, too hot the eye of heaven shines, ) and possibly taste (lips).
   * What is suggested by the use of the image? The beauty of his lover.
   * Does the image provoke an emotion or idea? How? It provokes images and feelings of his true burning love.
4. Figurative Language
   * Be able to find, discuss, and understand the figurative language used in the poem. The whole poem is mostly figurative language.
   * Use the list of literary devices that are listed below. Mostly only personification and metaphor.
5. Theme
   * What is the theme of the poem? Love
   * What is the purpose of the poem? It’s an ode of love to the speakers significant other.

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” This romantic and metaphorical line truly exemplifies this sonnet and much of Shakespeare’s other works as a whole. In this particular sonnet the speaker- though not directly Shakespeare- who is in love, declares to their loved one how they are so beautiful, and how they will be remembered forever by this poem. Shakespeare achieves this by smooth structure of concise and skilled syntax, bright and positive diction with a happy tone, and some amazing figurative language.

Sonnet 18, Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?, like all Shakespearean sonnets follows a rigid structure. The form consists of fourteen lines structured as three quatrains and a couplet. All four of these sections are separated through individual rhyme schemes. The first three, all quatrains have it’s own set of alternating end rhymes, while the final couplet shares the same end rhyme for each line. Another characteristic of a Shakespearean sonnet is the distinct meter following iambic pentameter, which adds a distinct rhythm to the poem. This dictates how the poet uses sound effects. A quatrain example is lines 1-4: to a summer’s day? …lovely and more temperate, …darling buds of May? ...all too short a date.” This follows the alternating rhyme scheme through the matching end rhymes of lines 1 and 3 and lines 2 and 4. Again this is seen in the final couplet as, “…eyes can see, …life to thee.” This finishes off the poem making it follow the noted and famed structure that is a Shakespearean sonnet. Although the sound effects and structure have power in the poem, but because the poem is sticking to the core structure so much the overall structure of a Shakespearean sonnet has more of an effect than this poem’s individual structure.

The overall sense of tone I derived from reading this poem is one of a happy, hopeful feeling. What struck this to me so strongly was the diction of colorful and happy sounding words. Repeatedly, words are used to describe happy, warm and young aspects. In line 1 the tone can be derived from “a summer’s day?” Summer indicates beauty, youth, and warmth and is also a season of growth warmth renewal and relaxation, therefore bringing a pleasurable effect. In line 5 “heaven” is used, which represents hope, and glory. The following line Shakespeare uses the word “gold” which wealth and prosperity. In addition, this attitude is carried throughout, finishing off in the couplet with “breath, lives, and life” giving the poem a hopeful image to settle on. Although these words are not directly able to be associated with each other, by reading the poem for feeling and enjoyment the tone and attitude is a happy and positive one.

Much of the power, notoriety and attention paid towards Sonnet 18 comes from Shakespeare’s ability to invoke imagery. Many metaphors and personification are used for a description to summer. However, the subject is not being compared to Summer but rather contrasted to it. The speaker first makes it appear in the first two quatrains the same image of summer, which is a metaphor for the audience’s beauty. However s the poem goes on, it is revealed that the speaker is trying to say his lover is MORE beautiful than a summer’s day. It does this through a series of negative faults of summer, introduced through literary devices. The second line reads, “Thou art more lovely and more temperate”, meaning a day isn’t perfect but you are. As the poem progresses it is revealed more and more clearly how a summer’s day has its faults. Winds blow away the pretty flowers: “winds do shake the darling buds of May”, and summer never lasts long enough: “Summer’s lease hath all too short a date”. This theme continues into the second quatrain, where the speaker says: “sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, and often his gold complexion dimmed, and every fair from fair sometimes decline, by chance, or nature’s changing course untrimmed”. All of this is a negative statement, however it seems as though the speaker is constantly about t interject or is at least thinking, ‘but you’re not.’ Then in the last 6 lines is comes to light because basically it can be interpreted as, ‘because you are better than summer these things will not happen to you, you will stay beautiful and never age, never die.’ By using such vivid images the poem really comes to life.